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CHARGE

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Of the COUNTY of

GLOUCESTER,

AT THE

Midſummer-Seſſions,

1723.

By Sir RICHARD COCKS, Bar^t.

LONDON,

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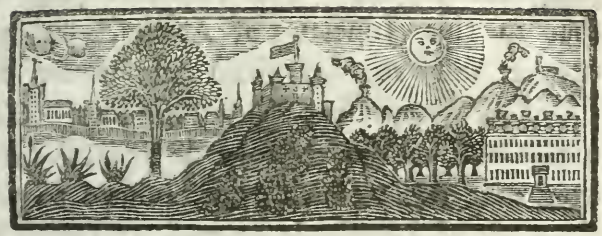

Sir RICHARD COCKS
HIS
CHARGE, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

THE great Infirmities of my Body forced me for ſome Years laſt paſt to decline all Publick Buſineſs: and tho' I am now very little better, nor indeed will my Age give me leave to expect much Amendment; yet the Deſires, or rather the Commands of the Gentlemen and Freeholders, to whom I am ſo much indebted, are of more force than, and ſuperiour to, my own Inclinations, and juſt Excuſes.

I am therefore once more come amongſt you, and I cannot but think it probable that in this Juncture of Affairs, you will expect and require from me ſome account of our preſent Circumſtances. Give me leave therefore to look a little back: And from that Reflection I muſt obſerve to you, that out of Gratitude as well as Duty, we ought to be the moſt ſober and religious People in the World; for there is no Nation under Heaven, that can ſhew ſo many ſignal, wonderful, and miraculous Preſervations from the viſible and immediate Hand of Providence.

Some of you remember the firſt landing of King *William*, and the diſarming the Army of King *James*, and his Flight, I may ſay, without Bloodſhed or Devaſtation, and the ſeaſonable Deliverance from Popery and Slavery, two very dear and inſeparable Companions; and after that, you cannot forget the Attempts and Conſpiracies form'd againſt the Life of that Inſtrument of Heaven, nor their ruinous and deſtructive Schemes to the Proteſtant Intereſt in Queen *Anne*'s time; and the Invaſions ſince his Majeſty's Acceſſion to the Throne, are freſh

in

in every one's Memory. From all these, God has in a wonderful manner preserved us: But neither these Miracles, nor Time, their Oaths, nor the King's Clemency, nor any Tie, Gratitude, or Obligation, can extirpate the Malice, or extinguish the Ambition of a restless Party amongst us, who cloak all their Villanies under the Pretence of Religion, and a feigned Zeal to restore the Injured and Oppressed to their Right. They have therefore, in despight of all that is sacred amongst Mankind, in violation of their Oaths, notwithstanding all the Discouragements and Disappointments they have met with, endeavoured to destroy the present Protestant Possessor of the Throne, and his Royal Family, and to set up in his and their places, a bigotted Popish Pretender. They have in the most solemn manner sworn to support and defend the Protestant, and they have in as solemn a manner renounced and abjured the Papist: But to palliate these Matters, and to excuse these unheard-of Villanies, as I before observed, they pretend a Concern for the Church, and a Zeal to restore an injured Prince to his Right. The honest Heathens accommodated their Conveniences to their Oaths; these Men violate their Oaths,

Oaths, I will not ſay to ſerve their Conveniences, but what is very far from it, to ruin both Us and Themſelves. If Oaths ſhall once be eſteem'd inſignificant, what muſt become of Property, and even in Civil Conteſts, what can be relied on as Evidence to determine our Rights? What Obligation can Art or Invention imagine, or find out, to ſupply the Place of Oaths? What Security can a Prince poſſibly have from his Subjects for their Allegiance, or what Aſſurance can the Subjects ever have from their Princes, of their good Government and Protection, if Oaths may be diſpenſed with at the pleaſure of the Taker? There can be no Confidence, no Aſſurance poſſibly given on either ſide, but the World muſt be filled with Miſtruſts, Bloodſhed, and Ruin. Farewel mutual Peace, Sincerity, and Tranquillity!

As for Obedience due to Princes, from the Scripture, and the Judgments pronounced againſt the Blaſphemers of God's Holy Name, which muſt in the higheſt degree attend Perjury; I will leave thoſe things to the Clergy to inſtruct you in. For tho' there has been one of the Higheſt Order guilty

guilty of that Abomination, and I fear more than one of the Inferiour; yet I hope and believe, that there are many good Men of that Order, that have not bowed their Knees to *Baal*, and that they will therefore the more earneſtly inculcate into you this ſo neceſſary a Duty of religiouſly obſerving Oaths.

I told you that theſe Violaters of Oaths amuſed themſelves, and endeavoured to ſeduce others, and became bewildred in a Wilderneſs by an *Ignis Fatuus*, by a fooliſh Notion of a Right in the Pretender: What Right, what Pretence of any Right can there be? Every one that knows any thing of our Excellent Conſtitution, knows that long before theſe Days, it was highly Criminal to ſay, That the Parliament could not diſpoſe of the Crown: And I pray you now let us conſider and examine King *George*'s Title; and if we find it a good one, we may fairly conclude, no other Perſon can have any. Did he come to the Throne by Force, Bribery, or by artful Sollicitation; or by your voluntary Invitation, by Act of Parliament made upon the juſteſt and moſt juſtifiable Reaſons imaginable, for the eaſy, hap-

happy, and good Government of the preſent Generation, and of future Poſterity, for the End and true Deſign of Government itſelf? People were not made for the Service and Pleaſure of their Governours; but the very End and Deſign of Governours and Government, was for the Advantage and Security of the People.

The Wiſe and Great Prince that then filled the Throne, Good as well as Wiſe and Great, and his judicious Council, met in Parliament; and perceiving and foreſeeing the Misfortunes that were like to befall the Nation upon the Death of the Duke of *Glouceſter*, who was the laſt Proteſtant Prince on whom the Crown was intail'd; and having learned by ſo late an Example the Miſeries that muſt unavoidably overwhelm the then flouriſhing Nation, if a Papiſt ſhould ever be again placed on the Throne: To prevent thoſe Abſurdities, thoſe juſt Fears and diſmal Views, they ſettled the Succeſſion to the Crown not upon the next Lineal Heir, that might or ſhould be a Proteſtant; for that might, and probably would, have bred vaſt Confuſion and Diſorder, and would not have anſwered the Ends

Ends of ſecuring the Peace and Tranquillity of the Kingdom: For what Papiſt could not have been diſpenſed with by the politick and irreligious Church of *Rome*, in order to have capacitated him to have taken poſſeſſion of the *Britiſh* Throne, to have ſerved their wicked Purpoſes? There was therefore in the ſecond Entail no incapacitating Clauſe, to bar the Right of any other Papiſt, but the Pretender's empty Claim: and that not becauſe there was any Right in it, or any Pretence or Colour of Right, but becauſe then ſome Princes (Enemies to our Religion and Nation) the better to colour their Malice and Ill-will towards us, and to ſeduce the turbulent Spirits amongſt us, and the more to encourage thoſe whom that horrid Religion of Popery had forced on all Occaſions to diſturb our publick Peace, endeavoured to make the World believe that they aſſiſted the Pretender, and eſpouſed his Quarrel, only to recover a Right inherent in him. To remove all Difficulties therefore out of the Minds of rational Men, not bigotted by Popery, or diſtracted by Poverty, or blinded with vain imaginary Hopes of Places and Preferments from the Ruins of the Publick;

which Ambition and vain imaginary Hopes too much influence many, for which we ſuffer : To remove all Difficulties, all Uneaſineſſes out of the Minds of honeſt and rational Men, this abſolute, ſupreme, governing Power renounced and abjured the Pretender, and ſet a Price upon his Head, to reward any that would deſtroy him, or take him alive, in order to have him receive condign Puniſhment for his impudent and impertinent Pretences: And this Dictatorial Power then ſettled the Reverſion of the Crown on a remoter Branch of the Royal Family, that had long been, and were then Proteſtants. They did not leave the Succeſſion at random, but ſettled it upon deep and wiſe Thought, upon mature and deliberate Conſultation, upon Foreſight, not Compliment; that is, upon the true Rules, and Foundation of Government, ſo long as probably they ſhould be capable of well-governing the People; that is, ſo long as thoſe of that Family ſhould be Proteſtant Princes, they ſhould by an Hereditary Right ſucceed one the other.

Theſe are the *Pacta Conventa* founded upon the beſt Reaſon, agreeable to the very fun-

fundamental Rules of Government between the People of *Great Britain*, and the *Hanoverian* Family: To this Settlement we ſwore in Queen *Anne*'s time, and have done the ſame very often ſince. This Settlement appeared ſo juſt and reaſonable, that at the General Peace thoſe that were the Pretender's Friends, and the Popiſh Princes, and Potentates, as well as Proteſtants, ſwore to ſupport it, or to be Guarantees for it. What Prince in the World has a better Title than King *George*, or what Pretender a worſe Title than the Chevalier of St. *George*? Of which I could tell you more, were it worth time, or any way neceſſary.

To ſet all this in a clear Light ſuitable to your Capacities, let me ask you this Queſtion: If any Neighbour of yours ſhould tell you that he had an honeſt good Landlord, and a good Bargain, but that a meddling Fellow had told ſomebody that his Landlord had no good Title to the Eſtate he had lett him, but that the Right was veſted in one unknown to him; that he had the Character of being a very hard cruel

Man that would ruin his Tenants; and if this Neighbour ſhould tell you, that becauſe this Buſy-Body had told ſomebody that his kind honeſt Landlord had not a good Title, and becauſe he could not rent that Eſtate of the hard cruel Landlord, he reſolved to leave his good Bargain, and his good Landlord: Would you take this nice conſcientious Man to be very wiſe? And if you pleaſe to conſider of it, this will appear to be the very Caſe of all our Proteſtant Diſcontents: I think all we ought to aim at, is to be well-governed; and then if that happens, I am ſure, for my part, I will neither at preſent, nor hereafter ever be troubleſomely inquiſitive about my Prince's Title. I never had any particular Favour, more than an Opportunity of ſpending my own Money in the publick Buſineſs, from any Prince; I never ſo much as ſaw King *George*, or any of the Royal Family; nor the Pretender, or his Progeny: I have, it is true, ſworn to King *George*, and abjur'd the Pretender; but if it were poſſible for me to believe, that King *George* and his Family were Papiſts, and the Pretender and his Family were Proteſtants, I believe I ſhould be ſooner for the Pretender, than for

for King *George*; and this I may lawfully ſay, for all my Oaths. For a Papiſt is, as I have demonſtrated to you before, uncapable of inheriting or poſſeſſing the Throne by our Laws, made upon the trueſt Reaſon and conſummate Wiſdom of the Nation.

Had I lived in the Times of *York* and *Lancaſter*, I believe I ſhould have been a Neuter: our Laws, and Liberties, and Religion were no ways concerned in that Quarrel; which-ever Side prevailed, they remained unſhaken, and equally ſecure. In our modern Conteſts, Men generally miſtake the Queſtion; when they ſay, ſuch a one is for King *George*, and ſuch a one is for the Pretender, the true State of the Caſe is, Whether Men are for or againſt themſelves? And to ſpeak plainly, I am for myſelf, and for that reaſon I am chiefly for the preſent Eſtabliſhment. Thoſe that are Proteſtants, if they are for King *George*, are for themſelves; if they are for the Pretender, they are againſt themſelves, tho

tho it may be, there are ſome Men that do not look ſo far. If a private Man ſhould prove lunatick, if he were Maſter of a Family, the Law would appoint him a Guardian, and not leave his Family and Eſtate to be managed by his Care, who was uncapable of taking care of either: If the eldeſt Son on whom the Eſtate and Honour was intailed ſhould loſe his Senſes, the Father, in order to preſerve the Honour and Eſtate in his Family, would procure an Act of Parliament to diſinherit him, which is viſible in the late Act that paſſed for the ſervice of my Lord *Digby* and his Family; in which Caſe, had we time, I could tell you ſome Things worth your Obſervation: But this I will take notice of to you, that we ought moſt certainly to be more concerned for the Proſperity and Welfare of the People of theſe united Kingdoms, than for any private Family, tho the greateſt in the Kingdom. To exemplify this; Was a King mad, would you let him go at large to kill whom he pleaſed, and

to

to commit any Outrage his Frenzy and wild Fancy ſuggeſted to him? And how much ſooner ought you to tie the Hands of a Papiſt, were he King, and to exclude thoſe from the Hopes of Succeſſion to the Crown, that were bred up with thoſe ruinous and deſtructive Principles to a Proteſtant People, which they call Religion, obliging them to keep no Faith with Hereticks, nor obſerve any Oaths made to them, but to extirpate them and their Religion, Root and Branch? All which is proved too evidently, not only by their Books and Tenets, but by their Practices and Attempts, too many to enumerate. There are ſome Wiſe Men in their own opinions, who are pleaſed to tell us, That a Popiſh Prince may be ſafely truſted with the Charge of a Proteſtant People: But theſe Men do rather want a Keeper to look after them, than an Argument to convince them.

The Diſturbers of the Peace of the Proteſtant Eſtabliſhment, make a great Outcry againſt the Government, on account

count of the many unfortunate Sufferers by the *South-Sea* Scheme: And what is more in this than mere Calumny? Did the Government force them to engage in that unhappy Project, or their own Covetouſneſs and Pride? And what has the Government to anſwer for that? Is the Government to be blamed for our irregular and unaccountable Paſſions?

Gentlemen,

Could we but look into the Secrets of theſe Men that would, and do delude us, under a colour of Zeal for Right and Religion, we ſhould then find all their Aims and Intentions to be only a ſtrong Deſire to ſet the World in an uproar, out of hopes, that in the ſcramble they may poſſibly get ſomething to gratify their Ambition, or to ſupply their Neceſſities? You may depend upon it, that thoſe Men who value no Oaths, have no Religion; and yet, as I obſerved before, they ſeduce others, ſometimes by their pretended Concern for the Danger of the Church, ſometimes

times by a pretended Zeal for Right. Would they but ſpeak plainly, and tell us the Truth, which is this; That if they could breed Diſcord amongſt us, and by the help of our Follies, and their own Arts, they could ſet the Pretender on the Throne, that then they expected to ſhare and divide amongſt themſelves, all the Places of Honour and Truſt in the Kingdom: Would they diſcover this viſible Matter of Fact to you, and tell you in intelligible Words, that they deſired your Aſſiſtance to bring in Popery, and to change our admirable Conſtitution for Slavery, only to make them great and rich; in my Conſcience, you would ſooner conſent to hang them, than to give them an Helping-hand for ſuch a Purpoſe. And this ſeems to be an irreſiſtible Truth paſt all contradiction: for we have ſeen the moſt Diſtinguiſhed, becauſe the worſt Oppoſer of our Peace and happy Eſtabliſhment, change his Side intirely the firſt Opportunity he had of changing his vain imaginary

Hopes for certain Honours and Advantages.

I give theſe Inſtances, not only to convince you that the ſole Proſpect of theſe uneaſy religious Deluders is no more in reality but a ſtrong Intention to advance themſelves, which if they can by any means accompliſh, they will then leave their blind deluded Followers and Party to ſhift for themſelves: But I mean from theſe Inſtances to perſuade all thoſe that have been deluded, to forſake ſuch worthleſs and dangerous Leaders, and to throw themſelves into the Arms of a merciful and gracious Prince, whoſe Favours to ſuch branded Offenders may give them ſufficient Aſſurance, that thoſe who have only been deluded, need never fear Forgiveneſs, but may expect any Favour they can in reaſon deſire. Had I Time and Leiſure, I would expoſe all their Cheats and Artifices to your View.

They

They tell us, and I think deſervedly, that if there was a Plot and Conſpiracy, why were not more of the detected Criminals executed? If there was no Plot, why were ſo many confined and puniſhed? As for the Plot, I believe all the Particulars I mention'd are ſo plain and viſible, that no one will deny them, but thoſe that are acquainted with them; and why they have not been puniſhed according to their Merit, is to me unaccountable: but this I dare affirm, that they who receive Advantages to themſelves or Friends from Clemency, have very ſmall reaſon to make reflections on it: But this is like the Party.

Gentlemen,

You have heard the Proclamation againſt Vice and Immorality read, and you find by it, that I am obliged to inforce it to you: You all remember the Book that tells us, *Becauſe Judgment is not ſpeedily executed, there-*

fore do the Sons of Men give themſelves over to work Wickedneſs. The old Heathens obſerved, that ſo long as they lived virtuouſly, according to the Rules of Reaſon and Religion, every thing they undertook went well with them, and ſucceeded at home and abroad; but when they gave themſelves up to Luxury and Debauchery, and neglected their religious Duties, every thing went contrary; they became poor at home, and contemptible every where; they were divided in their Opinions, ſubject to the Inſults of pitiful Enemies, and moleſted with inteſtine Diſcords and Civil Wars.

Conſider with yourſelves, amongſt your own Acquaintance, and you will eaſily perceive, that thoſe Families that live in the Fear of God, live in his Favour, in Health, Proſperity, and Plenty; when the Diſſolute and Immoral not only beggar their Eſtates, and become neceſſitous, but often ſhorten their Days, and come to untimely Ends,

the

the juſt Reward of their Wickedneſs and Follies. A Kingdom is but one great Family, compoſed of many little ones, and it fares with that great united one, as it does with every divided ſingle one: Dominion and Power are tranſlated and conveyed from the Vicious and Wicked, to the Virtuous and more Good. From whence proceed our Perjuries and Conſpiracies, but from the Contempt of God, and the Neglect of Religion? Would you live in Peace and Plenty at Home, would you become great and eſteemed Abroad, I may ſay theſe great Bleſſings are in your own reach and power, there is no more to do than to become a ſober and religious People; and in order to accompliſh ſo great an End, and to perform ſo neceſſary a Work, we muſt puniſh Vice, and diſcountenance Immoralities. Puniſhments and Fear of Penalties make Men conſiderative, and Conſideration makes Men wiſe, and Wiſdom makes Men religious.

I can't part with you, without putting you in mind of the particular Obligation that is incumbent on Us and You, to be very circumſpect in our Lives and Converſations, for theſe Reaſons; for with what Aſſurance can a debauched immoral Juſtice recommend Virtue and Piety to you? And with what Confidence can a profane Juryman preſent thoſe Irregularities, which it may be his own unthinking Self, by his ill Example, has occaſioned. Let us at laſt grow wiſe; let us become a ſober and religious People; let us leave off Faction, and let us unite for our common Safety and Preſervation: " Let " there be no other Diſtinction heard " of amongſt us, but of thoſe that are " for a *Proteſtant Prince*, and *the* " *preſent Eſtabliſhment*; and of thoſe " that are for *a Popiſh Prince*, and *a* " French *Government*." Theſe were ſome of the laſt Words King *William*, of Glorious Memory, ſpoke to us; and

and with theſe I chuſe to conclude, hoping that, for his ſake, they will make the more laſting and deeper Impreſſion on you.

F I N I S.

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